PROCEEDINGS OF LEARNED SOCIETIES.

ROYAL SOCIETY.

June 15, 1854.—The Earl of Rosse, President, in the Chair.

"On the Structure of certain Microscopic Test-objects, and their Action on the Transmitted Rays of Light." By Charles Brooke, M.A., F.R.S.

In order to arrive at any satisfactory conclusions regarding the action of any transparent medium on light, it is necessary to form some definite conceptions regarding the external form and internal structure of the medium. This observation appears to apply in full force to microscopic test-objects; and for the purposes of the present inquiry it will suffice to limit our observations to the structure of two well-known test-objects, the scales of *Podura plumbea*, and the siliceous loricæ or valves of the genus *Pleurosigma*, freed from organic matter: the former of these is commonly adopted as the test of the *defining* power of an achromatic object-glass, and the several species of the latter as the tests of the *penetrating* or *separating* power as it has been termed. The defining power depends only on the due correction of chromatic and spherical aberrations, so that the image of any point of an object formed on the retina may not overlap and confuse the images of adjacent points; this correction is never theoretically perfect, since there will always be residual terms in the general expression for the aberration, whatever practicable number of surfaces we may introduce as arbitrary constants; but it is practically perfect, when the residual error is a quantity less than that which the eye can appreciate. The separation of the markings of the Pleurosigmata and other analogous objects, is found to depend on good defining power associated with large angle of aperture.

The Podura scale appears to be a compound structure, consisting of a very delicate transparent lamina or membrane, covered with an imbricated arrangement of epithelial plates, the length of which is six or eight times their breadth, somewhat resembling the tiles on a roof, or the long pile of some kinds of plush. This structure may be readily shown by putting a live Podura into a small test-tube, and inverting it on a glass slide; the insect should then be allowed for some time to leap and run about in the confined space. By this means the scales will be freely deposited on the glass, and being subsequently trodden on by the insect, several will be found, from which the epithelial plates have been partially rubbed off, and at the margin of the undisturbed portion, the form and position of the plates may be readily recognized. This structure appears to be rendered most evident by mounting the scales thus obtained in Canada balsam, and illuminating them by means of Wenham's parabolic reflector. The structure may also be very clearly recognized when the scale is seen as an opake object under a Ross's $\frac{1}{12}$th (specially adjusted for uncovered objects), illuminated by a combination of the

parabola and a flat Lieberkuhn, as the writer has elsewhere described*. The underside of the scale thus appears as a smooth glistening surface with very slight markings, corresponding probably to the points of insertion of the plates on the contrary side. The minuteness and close proximity of the epithelial plates will readily account for their being a good test of *definition*, while their prominence renders them independent of the *separating* power due to large angle of aperture.

The structure of the second class of test-objects above mentioned differs entirely from that above described; it will suffice for the present purpose to notice the valves of three species only of the genus *Pleurosigma*, which, as arranged in the order of easy visibility, are, *P. formosum*, *P. hippocampus*, *P. angulatum*.

These appear to consist of a lamina of homogeneous transparent silex, studded with rounded knobs or protuberances, which, in *P. formosum* and *P. angulatum*, are arranged like a tier of round shot in a triangular pile, and in *hippocampus*, like a similar tier in a quadrangular pile, as has frequently been described; and the visibility of these projections is probably proportional to their convexity. The "dots" have by some been supposed to be depressions; this however is clearly not the case, as fracture is invariably observed to take place *between* the rows of dots, and not *through* them, as would naturally occur if the dots were depressions, and consequently the substance thinner there than elsewhere.

This in fact is always observed to take place in the siliceous loricæ of some of the border tribes that occupy a sort of neutral, and not yet undisputed, ground between the confines of the animal and vegetable kingdoms; as for example the *Isthmia*, which possesses a reticulated structure, with depressions between the meshes, somewhat analogous to that which would result from pasting together bobbinnet and tissue paper.

The valves of *P. angulatum* and other similar objects have been by some writers† supposed to be made up of two substances possessing different degrees of refractive power; but this hypothesis is purely gratuitous, since the observed phænomena will naturally result from a series of rounded or lenticular protuberances of one homogeneous substance. Moreover, if the centres of the markings were centres of greatest density, if in fact the structure were at all analogous to that of the crystalline lens, it is difficult to conceive why the oblique rays only should be visibly affected. When *P. hippocampus* or *P. formosum* is illuminated by a Gillett's condenser, with a central stop placed under the lenses, and viewed by a quarter-inch object-glass of 70° aperture, both being accurately adjusted, we may observe in succession, as the object-glass approaches the object, first a series of well-defined bright dots; secondly, a series of dark dots replacing these; and thirdly, the latter are again replaced by bright dots, not however as well defined as the first series. A similar suc-

* See British Association Reports for 1850.

† Vide Quarterly Journal of Microscopical Science, No. V. pp. 9, 10.

cession of bright, dark, and bright points may be observed in the centre of the markings of some species of *Coscinodiscus* from Bermuda.

These appearances would result if a thin plate of glass were studded with minute, equal and equidistant plano-convex lenses, the foci of which would necessarily lie in the same plane. If the focal surface or plane of vision of the object-glass be made to coincide with this plane, a series of bright points would result from the accumulation of the light falling on each lens. If the plane of vision be next made to coincide with the surfaces of the lenses, these points would appear dark, in consequence of the rays being refracted towards points *now* out of focus. Lastly, if the plane of vision be made to coincide with the plane *beneath* the lenses that contains their several foci, so that each lens may be, as it were, combined with the object-glass, then a second series of bright points will result from the accumulation of the rays transmitted at those points. Moreover, as all rays capable of entering the object-glass are concerned in the formation of the second series of bright focal points, whereas the first series are formed by the rays of a conical shell of light only, it is evident that the circle of least confusion must be much less, and therefore the bright points better defined, in the first than in the last series.

If the supposed lenses were of small convexity, it is evident that the course of the more oblique rays only would be sensibly influenced; hence probably the structure of *P. angulatum* is recognized only by object-glasses of large angular apertures, which are capable of admitting very oblique rays.

The writer has recently, in an address to the members of the Royal Institution, proposed to explain the extreme darkness of the dots, under certain conditions of focus and illumination, by the hypothesis that some of the oblique rays are thrown out of the field by internal reflexion, being incident at the upper surface at an angle too large for emergence; but this does not appear to invalidate the present hypothesis respecting the course of the transmitted rays.

It does not appear to be desirable that objects should be illuminated by an entire, or, as it may be termed, a *solid* cone of light of much larger angle than that of the object-glass. The extinction of an object by excess of illumination may be well illustrated by viewing with a one-inch object-glass the *Isthmia* illuminated by Gillett's condenser. When this is in focus, and its full aperture open, the markings above described are wholly invisible; but as the aperture is successively diminished by the revolving diaphragm, the object becomes more and more distinct, and is perfectly defined when the aperture of the illuminating pencil is reduced to about 20°. The same point may be attained, although with much sacrifice of definition, by gradually depressing the condenser, so that the rays may diverge before they reach the object; and it may be remarked generally that the definition of objects is always most perfect, when an illuminating pencil of suitable form is accurately adjusted to focus, that is, so that the source of light and the plane of vision may be conjugate foci of the illuminator. If an object-glass of 120° aper-

ture or upwards be used as an illuminator, the markings of Diatomaceæ will be scarcely distinguishable, with any object-glass; the glare of the central rays overpowering the effects of structure on those that are more oblique.

"On the Structure and Functions of the Rostellum in *Listera ovata*." By J. D. Hooker, M.D., F.R.S.

The author first gives an account of the form and structure of the rostellum of *Listera ovata*, and its relation and position to the anther and stigma. He finds that the rostellum is divided by parallel septa (at right angles to the plane of that organ) into a series of longitudinally elongated loculi, which gradually taper from the base upwards, and terminate at two opake cellular spots, one on each side of the apex of the rostellum, towards which latter the loculi also converge. When the flower is fully expanded, these loculi are distended with a viscid grumous fluid, full of chlorophyll granules. Their external walls, and the septa dividing them, are formed of a delicate, transparent tissue, which is cellular at the base and apex of the rostellum only.

Their grumous contents, when examined at the earliest period of development, present the appearance of opake club-shaped compressed bodies, with areolated surfaces; a form and appearance that may be restored at a later period by coagulating with alcohol.

At the period of impregnation the slightest irritation of the rostellum causes the sudden and forcible discharge of the contents of these loculi (through the rupture of the cellular tissue at the apex of the rostellum) and its protrusion in the form of two viscid glands, which coalesce into one, after which the rostellum rapidly collapses and contracts.

The pollen-masses, when freed from the anther-case, fall naturally upon the rostellum; they are retained there by their viscid gland-like contents, and, breaking up, the pollen-grains become (by the contraction of the rostellum) applied to the subjacent stigmatic surface.

The author adds remarks on the structure of the rostellum in allied genera of Orchideæ, and indicates some of the more important morphological changes to which that organ is subjected, in connection with the development of various appendages to the column and pollen in the same natural family.

ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

November 23, 1852.—Dr. Gray, F.R.S., Vice-President, in the Chair.

1. Note on the Gouwa (Bos frontalis) of Western India, called "the Bison" by English residents. By Capt. J. Wycliffe Thompson.

Eliot Vale, Blackheath, Kent,
20th Nov. 1852.

The size of the beast I cannot state with any exactness, having had no means of judging beyond forming an estimate by the eye of the